

Fourth of July parade shooting

Suspect bought 5 weapons despite threats

BY MICHAEL TARM, KATHLEEN FOODY AND STEPHEN GROVES
Associated Press

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. — A man charged Tuesday with seven counts of murder after firing off more than 70 rounds at an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago legally bought five weapons, including the high-powered rifle used in the shooting, despite authorities being called to his home twice in 2019 for threats of violence and suicide, police said.

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said the suspect, if convicted of the first-degree murder charges, would receive a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole. He promised that dozens more charges would be sought.

Christopher Covelli, a spokesman for the Lake County Major Crime Task Force said the suspected shooter, who was arrested late Monday, used a rifle "similar to an AR-15" to spray more than 70 rounds from atop a commercial building into a

crowd that had gathered for the parade in Highland Park, an affluent community of about 30,000 on the Lake Michigan shore.

A seventh victim died of her or his injuries Tuesday. More than three dozen other people were wounded in the attack, which Covelli said the suspect had planned for several weeks.

The assault happened less than three years after police went to the suspect's home following a call from a family member who said he was threatening "to kill everyone" there. Covelli said police confiscated 16 knives, a dagger and a sword, but said there was no sign he had any guns at the time, in September 2019.

Police in April 2019 also responded to a reported suicide attempt by the suspect, Covelli said.

The suspect legally purchased the rifle used in the attack in Illinois within the past year, Covelli said. In all, police said, he purchased five firearms, which were recovered by officers at his father's home.

The revelation about his gun pur-



«Brooke and Matt Strauss, who were married Sunday, pause after leaving their wedding bouquets Tuesday in downtown Highland Park, Illinois, near the scene of Monday's mass shooting.

Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

December 2019, when he was 19. His father sponsored his application.

At the time "there was insufficient basis to establish a clear and present danger" and deny the application, state police said in a statement.

Investigators who have interrogated the suspect and reviewed his social media posts have not determined a motive or found any indication that he targeted victims by race, religion or other protected status, Covelli said.

Earlier in the day, FBI agents peeked into trash cans and under picnic blankets as they searched for more evidence at the scene. The shots were initially mistaken for fireworks before hundreds of revelers ran in terror.

A day later, baby strollers, lawn

chairs and other items left behind by panicked paradegoers remained inside a wide police perimeter. Outside the police tape, some residents drove up to collect blankets and chairs they abandoned.

David Shapiro, 47, said the gunfire quickly turned the parade into "chaos."

"People didn't know right away where the gunfire was coming from, whether the gunman was in front or behind you chasing you," he said Tuesday as he retrieved a stroller and lawn chairs.

The gunman initially evaded capture by dressing as a woman and blending into the fleeing crowd, Covelli said.

The shooting was just the latest to shatter the rituals of American life. Schools, churches, grocery stores and now community parades have all become killing grounds in recent months. This time, the bloodshed came as the nation tried to celebrate its founding and the bonds that still hold it together.

Politics

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The Times parachuted back into Oregon late last month and issued a report June 28 once again forecasting the possible end to the Democrats' victory streak that goes back to 1986.

President Joe Biden's popularity was falling as inflation drove up the costs of gas, food and other necessities. A three-way race to succeed the outgoing governor was ratcheting up against a backdrop of U.S. Supreme Court rulings on abortion, guns and the environment that drove multiple wedges into the electorate. The report's bottom line: the only political certainty was uncertainty.

In what could be a "wave year" for Republicans, the Times said "even deep-blue Oregon is suddenly compet-

itive."

Citing "Biden, crime, gas prices," New York Times reporter Reid J. Epstein wrote "almost nobody in Oregon seems to be happy."

The combination would give Republican nominee Christine Drazen or unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson an opening to win a plurality, upsetting Democratic front-runner Tina Kotek

Kotek and other Democrats said the decision would galvanize voters to get to the polls and ensure Democratic victories in November.

Congress: Flipping the 5th

The other top target of speculation is the 5th Congressional District.

Well before the May 17 primary, many political forecasters in Washington, D.C., were saying a primary upset of U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Canby,

could open the door for Republicans to flip the district in the fall.

Terrebonne attorney Jamie McLeod-Skinner rode a wave of progressive dissatisfaction with the centrist Schrader to oust him in the primary. She'll face the Republican former mayor of Happy Valley, Lori Chavez-DeRemer, on Nov. 8.

With Schrader out, it's essentially an open seat, one of three in Oregon this year. In closed primaries, the Democratic primary was won by a candidate more liberal than the incumbent, while Republicans chose as their nominee a conservative with ties to allies of former President Donald Trump.

With Democrats getting hit with blame for rising inflation, forecasters see an opening for Republicans.

FiveThirtyEight, the po-

litical website run by veteran forecaster Nate Silver, issued a report showing Chavez-DeRemer with a 73% chance of defeating McLeod-Skinner.

Silver's website noted a survey by PPPolls for 314Action, a group advocating the election of candidates who support scientific solutions to issues. The group has endorsed McLeod-Skinner, but the poll it paid for showed Chavez-DeRemer leading McLeod-Skinner 42%-41%, with 17% undecided. PPPolls gets an A- rating in Silver's grading of the reliability and level of partisan control over results.

The Hill, a public policy publication in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday tapped Oregon's 5th District as one of "seven close races that could decide control of the House." Two other top political tea-leaf readers — Cook Political Re-

port and the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia — also have the seat as a toss-up at this early juncture.

Just as in the governor's race, Democrats say Republicans' opposition to abortion and gun control could motivate suburban centrist voters to return to the Democratic camp.

Midnight money madness

Midnight Thursday was the end of the quarter for congressional fundraising. As the last hours approached, candidates from both parties sent out mass emails asking supporters to make electronic contributions before the witching hour, so they can be counted when records are released this month.

"Kevin McCarthy, Alek Skarlatos, and their radical right-wing cronies are making a big play to flip this district

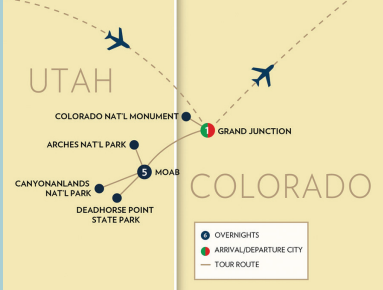
and steal the House majority," wrote Val Hoyle, the Democratic candidate for Oregon's 4th Congressional District just before 6 p.m. Thursday.

McCarthy is the House Republican Leader, and Skarlatos is the GOP nominee in the 4th District. In Republican e-mails, the bold name targets are President Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Races for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate operate under rules of the Federal Elections Commission. It currently requires candidates to file quarterly statements on fundraising and spending. That means reports will be issued this month and in October for the July 1-Sept. 30 period. On Oct. 19 — 20 days before the Nov. 8 election — contributions have to be reported within 48 hours.

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